

EXAMINATION

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The Rev. Mr. HARRIS's

SCRIPTURAL RESEARCHES

O N

The Licitness of the Slave-Trade.

By the Rev. JAMES RAMSAY.

L O N D O N :

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Examination was drawn up in the country, from a casual perusal of Mr. Harris's Scriptural Researches, with a view of putting them into the hands of any person, who might be employed in answering that very extraordinary work. But on coming up to town, and understanding that Mr. Harris's reasoning had produced effects on certain people, who had not studied the scriptures, or attended to that spirit of freedom, which runs throughout the Old and New Testament, and who hitherto had suffered themselves to be reluctantly dragged along by the present prevailing enthusiasm in favour of freedom, but now eagerly seized on a pretence for abandoning the cause, it has been judged proper to give it at once to the publick. Mr. Harris affects to proceed mathematically in the treatment of his subject, and therefore establishes certain data. I had thought it sufficient to contradict their particular application, in my examination of the subject; but others thinking it necessary to take more direct notice of them, I have subjoined the following short observations.

Dat. 1, 2. "The scriptures of the Old and New Testament are of equal authority, and contain the unerring decisions of the word of God."

Observation. Certainly: but it will not be disputed, that there are many things, not indeed deserving the name of decisions, but that pass without censure, and are seemingly allowed there, which we know to be forbidden to us, and which will not apply to the improved state of mankind. Laws must be adapted, not only to the state of society, but to the present state of the improvement of the human mind, which we know has been gradually advancing from the earliest ages.

Dat. 3, 4. "It is criminal to refuse assent to what the scriptures decide to be intrinsically good or bad."

Obser. Suppose this. Yet may we not inquire if a thing or practice be really so declared, and if it concerns our salvation, to form a decided opinion on it? Are we not liable to mistake practices, arising out of circumstances connected with the first formation of society, and therefore not positively censured, for such decisions of intrinsic goodness? Thus the eating of swines flesh was allowed before the promulgation of the law of Moses; that law strictly forbade it; the Christian law allows it again as at the beginning: or, the Jews were alone restrained from the use of it; while they continued under a particular œconomy, and their transgression of this law was only a crime, because it was enjoined them; not because it was in itself a thing unlawful, as murder, adultery, and the like.

Dat. 5, 6. "Every scriptural decision, however incomprehensible, must be assented to as a declaration of the word of God." We must consider the circumstances under which that decision is made; how far it is agreeable to our benevolent religion, and how far it is applicable to our conduct,

conduct, before we imitate it. The drunken incest of Lot is not censured. It was the means of producing two mighty nations; from which, according to the author's manner of reasoning, he ought to conclude it was approved of; yet I suppose he will not recommend the imitation to any person in these days.

Dat. 7. "The slave-trade must be believed to be intrinsically just and lawful, if the scriptures give a sanction to it." Suppose the slave-trade to have this sanction (which yet is not true) unless the author can shew how it can be carried on without infringing on our Saviour's golden rule, of doing as we would be done by; unless he can instruct us how we can go to the coast of Africa, and by every fraudulent, violent, oppressive method, rob, murder, and enslave innocent people without a crime; then are we to keep our practice, if not our opinion, suspended.

Dat. 8. "No abuse of a lawful pursuit, can make that pursuit criminal." It is lawful for a man to provide for his family; but not to rob and murder on the highway under such a pretence. Whenever a man's industry is connected with such practices, the actual exertion of it is a crime in him, though to provide for his family in an honest way would be laudable. That there is an unlawful slavery noticed in the scriptures, is clear, from the punishment that Pharaoh brought on himself and Ægypt, for enslaving the Jews. The author should distinguish, and mark the difference between the slavery that (page 41) is almost commanded, and that which brings down divine judgments on the oppressor, and shew that his patrons of Liverpool practise only the first.

Dat. 9. "No private or publick advantage will ever justify the slave-trade, till it be proved essentially just and lawful in its nature." Here we are sincerely agreed; and according to the distinction proposed for datum 8, he has only to set heartily to work, and prove the Liverpool slave-trade to be that particular sort of slave-trade, "which God hath commanded as being essentially just and lawful in its nature."

Dat. 10. "No argument drawn from abuse, can prove the intrinsic deformity of the slave-trade, unless it be proved essentially unjust." These are words without meaning. We are not combating an ideal slavery; but slavery accompanied with robbery, oppression, misery, murder. Wherever we find slavery so attended, it becomes a horrid crime, be it intrinsically never so just.

Dat. 11. "If abuses committed in the prosecution of a lawful pursuit can be prevented, then the advantages arising from it, ought to have a powerful influence against the abolition." But if these abuses cannot possibly be prevented (for are we to oppress and murder according to law?) then the greatest advantages attending any practice must be abandoned, till a method shall be discovered, of separating them from iniquity and bloodshed.

Dat. 12. "If the slave-trade is to be abolished, because of the abuses committed in it, then every other branch of trade, in which abuses are committed, ought to share the same fate." Most certainly in turn, in proportion to the atrociousness of each. Let us once get this staring monster subdued, and we will be obliged to the author for pointing out any other iniquitous traffick that deserves to follow immediately in the train
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of the Liverpool slave-trade. The fallaciousness of this author's reasoning, is exceedingly well exposed, in the Critical Review of April, 1788, to which I refer the reader.

From this view of the author's data, it will appear, that he has totally confounded times and circumstances. The law of Moses was enacted in aid of natural religion, till the perfect religion of Christ should be given to the world. The doctrines of this last, enjoin us to consider and treat all men as our brethren; and its effect was gradually to take away all burthenfome ceremonies, all oppressive distinctions. Why are we then sent back to less perfect institutions for the rule of our practice? We are to go on to perfection, refine sentiment, and extend benevolence. What has raised Europe above the rest of the world, but the abolition of domestick slavery? What degrees of opulence and prosperity might it acquire, if the abominable, contracted, branch of trade in the bodies of our fellow creatures of Africa, were changed to a fair, equitable intercourse of productions and manufactures!

J. R.

EXAMINATION, &c.

THIS gentleman professes to treat the subject seriously, and to submit his opinion to the decisions of revealed religion. No man has a right to dispute his sincerity, as far as his own way of thinking is concerned; but few serious people will peruse his extraordinary positions, without having their reverence for their Creator shocked, and their benevolence to their brother affected. The Scriptures, from which he draws his conclusions, we believe to teach, that all men are equally dear to their Creator, and that we owe love and good offices to each other. But if his deductions be fairly made, we must no longer entertain this opinion; for one part of mankind is to be kidnapped, evil intreated, oppressed, murdered, to indulge the avarice of another; and, page 76, Corol. 3d. "He doth not believe the Scriptures, who is not persuaded that this doctrine is taught there."

But the author stumbles at the very threshold. Our Saviour (John v. 39.) bids the Jews to search the scriptures; "for in them ye think ye have eternal life; for they are they which testify of me," the Saviour come to free men from the bondage of sin, into the glorious privilege of the sons of God. But it seems something else is meant. We are to search the scriptures (see title page) for a commission to Liverpool captains for fitting

fitting out ships, and loading them with powder, shot, and cutlasses, to set the Africans on to assault, kidnap, and enslave each other; to be transferred over to them; to be murdered by bad air, thirst, and famine, in the passage to the West-Indies; where the poor remains are to be set to hard labour, without food, without cloathing, without rest, sufficient to support nature.

It is true (preface, page 5.) he, with all the other advocates for slavery, declares himself "an enemy to injustice and oppression." But the design of his book is to shew, that the ill-treatment of slaves is not an object of divine animadversion; for (p. 16.) Sarah was permitted without censure, "to use cruel oppressive treatment to Hagar;" and (p. 26.) Joseph is approved of by God for the cruel manner in which he enslaved and exchanged the abodes of the Egyptians. Which of these is to be believed; his general assertion, or his particular application? Or may we conclude, that he reserves to himself the feelings of humanity, and sells tyranny and oppression to his friends of Liverpool.

In the scriptures servants are frequently mentioned; but, in this dissertation, they are transformed into "slave trade." The places, where traffick in slaves is related, are Joseph's brethren (Gen. xxxvii.) selling him to the Ishmaelites, who sell him to Potiphar; the Tyrians (Ezek. xxvii. 13.) who had a market for the persons of men; and Babylon, the mother of abominations, (Rev. xviii. 13.) who exposed to sale, slaves and souls of men. I hope none of these instances are proposed to the imitation of the "ancient and loyal town of Liverpool;" for a black mark is set on them to prevent them from being followed.

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Now there is some difference between dealing in slaves as a branch of trade, and buying the service of a domestic; even as it is not every man who eats meat, that is or could act the part of a butcher. In the case of the Jews there was something particular. They were obliged to admit their slaves to all the national privileges, to circumcision, the pass-over, and other solemn feasts, and to instruct them in the true religion (Gen. xvii. 13. Exod. xii. 44. Deut. xvi. 11. and xxxi. 12. Josh. viii. 35.) In buying them from the Heathen around them, they recovered them from idolatry; they gave them a weekly sabbath. In their treatment they were commanded to remember, that they themselves had been slaves in Egypt. When they are threatened for their sins, the ill treatment of their slaves makes a capital part of the charge against them. But modern masters think that nothing of this sort concerns them.

The Jews were intended to communicate to the world the knowledge of the true religion. He who brings good out of evil made use of the slavery, in practice, to extend this knowledge to persons, whom it could not at that time have otherwise reached. But nothing in the bible countenances a trade in slaves. Even the transferring them in ordinary cases is checked as in that of wives and concubines, (Exod. xxi. 11.) Their ill treatment was guarded against, by that law which gave them freedom if their master had struck out a single tooth.

Indeed, among the Jews, the number of slaves must have been small. They were numerous in a narrow territory, and were in general husbandmen, and used ploughs and other instruments of agriculture, and wrought in the field with their servants.

servants. Ziba, who appears to have been steward to the house of Saul, had only twenty servants to assist him and his sons in cultivating the lands belonging to the family. The Jews on their return from captivity had only one servant to six persons, or one in each family. The remnant of the Gibeonites, who served the temple, was then 392. It is not therefore fair to consider every accidental possession of a servant, either as an instance, or as a vindication of the Liverpool "slave trade;" of which no ancient nation could ever form an idea. We may rather conclude, that though the Jews were permitted to buy slaves from the Heathen, they did not traffick in them; and forcibly to enslave their brethren was death. (See Exod. xxi. 16. Deut xxiv. 7.)

Of Mr. Harris's data as general propositions, I shall say little more; the application alone is what the present subject is concerned in. I shall only suggest an additional datum, as necessary to complete his principles of reasoning.

Dat. 13. If the slave trade, though "intrinsically licit," cannot now be carried on, without breaking through every human and divine law, without cheating, violence, oppression, murder, then must it be laid aside, till we shall have discovered a way of carrying it on, agreeably to the doctrines of the gospel, by which we are enjoined to consider all men as our brethren, and to deal by them as we wish them to deal by us.

Page 16. Speaking of Abraham's possessing of servants, he calls it, "a positive approbation, a sanction of divine authority in favour of the slave-trade." What a change is put on the Reader! Abraham possessed servants; therefore the Liverpool slave-trade has a divine sanction. For if this
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be not meant, nothing is meant. His book is published to vindicate this trade; it is dedicated to the corporation, who must so understand it. Now let a man only read Mr. Newton or Mr. Falconbridge's, or any other eye-witness's account of this trade, and what horrid impiety must of necessity be understood! Is there "a divine sanction" for all the iniquity accompanying this very diabolical business, the kidnapping, chaining, murdering, suffocating of millions of unhappy fellow creatures? Are such things not barely permitted, but (p. 42.) approved, encouraged, and seemingly enjoined?

Abraham was a rich, powerful, prince. As he travelled through various countries, numbers must have been desirous of attaching themselves to his fortune, and have offered themselves for his attendants. His humanity might have induced him to purchase children from unnatural parents, or captives from robbers. But all in his family were in a situation very different from that of West Indian slaves. We learn, that on the supposition of his dying childless, he intended one of them for his heir; that he intrusted a servant to chuse a wife for his son Isaac; that he put arms in his servants hands, and led them out to battle. There is nothing of West Indian slavery in all this.

But a particular stress is laid on the story of Hagar, and Sarah's ill treatment of her. Page 19. "She obtained no favourable sentence from the Divine Tribunal for leaving her mistress, nor was Sarah censured for her severity." Sarah was not present when the angel appeared unto Hagar, therefore she is neither praised nor condemned. But that Hagar believed she had a favourable sentence,

sentence, and that her conduct was not condemned, when assured that the Lord had seen her affliction, which is the scripture phrase for deliverance (Gen. xxix. 32. and xxxi. 42. Exod. iii. 7.), and that she should have a son, and that her seed should be multiplied, appears from her acknowledgment of the vision, and returning to her mistress. Nor can we imagine in what more flattering manner her affliction could have been recompensed, or how she could have been afflicted so as to have deserved a recompence, and her mistress not to have been in fault. It was necessary for her to return to her mistress, that her son might partake of the sign of the covenant, and be instructed in the true religion.

Hagar's case (p. 19.) is compared with an African female slave in the West Indies. Nothing can be more opposite. Josephus says, Pharaoh made Abraham a present of money; and the scriptures say, that he intreated Abraham well for Sarah's sake, adding immediately, he had cattle, and men servants, and maid servants, as if Pharaoh had presented them; among whom Hagar might have been one; or, as it appears she was a worshipper of the true God, she might voluntarily have entered into Sarah's service. Certainly she had never been cooped up in a Guinea trader, nor set to plant the sugar-cane; nor was she ordered to return and submit herself for her mistress's profit, but for her own and her son's sake; and when that purpose was answered she was dismissed.

There is therefore no foundation for the author's deduction, p. 20. that "a divine voice declares her to be her master's indisputable property, and the original bargain to be just and
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lawful in its nature; and that the (Liverpool) slave-trade, even attended with circumstances not conformable to the feelings of humanity, is essentially consistent with the rights of justice, and has the positive sanction of God for its support, however displeasing these circumstances may be to his fatherly providence." Let any man make sense of this who can. I understand only the extreme boldness of the expression. Here is a right to enslave and an approbation, and also a censure of the exercise of this right. Here our natural notions of benevolence are set in opposition to revelation, p. 42. Revelation commands us to enslave our brethren, even against the suggestions of the feelings of humanity. Surely the writer should shew the high purposes answered by slavery, to gain which it is an act of piety to violate our benevolent feelings.

We come now to the story of Joseph, which, p. 23, "ascertains the inherent lawfulness of the" (Liverpool) "slave-trade." The first thing that strikes us in his account is, his illustrating his doctrine by Joseph's political arrangements of the kingdom of Egypt, rather than by Joseph's own story; which, except in the horrid circumstances of the middle passage, agrees entirely with the Liverpool slave-trade. Joseph is found at a distance from protection. His enemies kidnap him and sell him to slave-brokers, who carry him into Egypt, and dispose of him as an article of commerce to Potiphar. His kidnappers saw, and like Guinea captains disregarded, the anguish of his soul. It is true, afterwards, when they believed themselves in danger of being enslaved in turn, they upbraid each other with their unfeeling cruelty, and charge their distress to its account.

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But this was only because Scriptural Researches had not then been published: for they, p. 20, would have proved, that “ though the action was not altogether conformable to the feelings of humanity, and was even displeasing to his Fatherly Providence; and though doubtless God would see, and of consequence recompense, Joseph for his affliction as he had Hagar; yet this stroke in the slave-trade is essentially consistent with the unalienable rights of justice; has the positive sanction of God in its support, nay, his approbation, p. 16, and p. 42, even his command.”

But let us examine Joseph's management of the Egyptians, not as this author, but as the scriptures represent it. In the years of plenty Joseph stored the extraordinary produce of each district in the neighbouring cities. One tenth part belonged of right to the king; the rest he purchased at a low price with the king's treasures. In the years of famine he sold the corn out to the inhabitants of the districts nearest to his respective storehouses at an advanced price, and accumulated the money, cattle, and moveables of the whole kingdom, and at last made a bargain for their lands and persons. It is not to be supposed that any property, except money, was taken out of the original possessors hands; for this would have answered no purpose, but to distress the people and embarrass government. Indeed, where could the whole cattle and moveables of the kingdom have been stored? When the seven years of famine were ended, Pharaoh was the sole proprietor. Joseph then gives the inhabitants a charter, restores them their lands and cattle, on condition of paying to Pharaoh a second tenth of the produce of the land, which made their contributions to the revenue
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a fifth part of their crops. It appears no other badge or burden of slavery was imposed, except this rent, which was a tenth part more than they had formerly paid.

The common rent of the bare land in England is estimated at one-third of the produce, and the farmer must supply himself with stock, except perhaps buildings, and also contribute largely in a variety of ways to the publick revenues: but by Joseph's regulation the Egyptian farmer paid only a fifth part for the use of his stock and land, and for the support of government. After having transferred themselves and property to Pharaoh, they could not have been freed on easier terms: and as we often see, that he who hires a farm, grows rich on a possession on which the owner had been ruined, probably the Egyptians became as happy under their new tenure as they had been under their old. In the most unfavourable light, it may be compared with the change that took place at the conquest, when free tenures became feudal, charged with certain services.

Our translation, Gen. xlvii. 20, 21. says, "So the land became Pharaoh's; and as for the people, he removed them to cities from one end of the borders of Egypt, even to the other end thereof." In the Septuagint it is, "and the land became Pharaoh's, and he subjected the people to be servants to him from one end of Egypt to the other." It is to the same purport in the Samaritan copy. This reads better, and is more probable, than that Joseph should have made the whole nation, as Mr. Harris affirms, change settlements in such a manner as if the people of Kent were sent to the Orkneys, and those of the Ork-

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neys were brought to Kent. This would be such a trifling with peoples lives and feelings, such a waste of property, such a perversion of all experience, and particular knowledge of the agriculture proper in each district, as is only applicable to the Liverpool slave-trade; but cannot, on such slight grounds as this general expression is, be imagined in a man of Joseph's character, with a pretended view to prevent rebellion. Or the expression in our translation may bear, that the people were distributed so as to be near the respective store-houses, on which their maintenance was assigned.

Therefore "the change made, p. 25, 26, in the happy condition of the Ægyptians, the transportation of 7 or 8 millions of every age, sex, condition, rank; infants, children, decrepit, infirm, delicate, through the scorching sands of a parched up country," is the mere fiction of imagination, to palliate the still more shocking conduct of the writer's patrons of Liverpool. The Ægyptians offered themselves for servants, to save themselves from starving. His patrons force the Africans to be slaves, not as he says, from "a state of absolute indigence," but reduced from plenty and ease to famine, nakedness, and want, by stripes, fetters, cruelty and oppression.

Page 28. It is said, "Joseph, when able to relieve them, took advantage of the extreme indigence of the Ægyptians, to reduce them into the condition of slaves, and in this acted by the immediate direction of God, who made this work to prosper." Supposing all this true, yet there is nothing common between this transaction and the Liverpool African commerce; but the author's
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having given them one common name, " slave-trade." The Ægyptians, after a fair transfer of themselves and goods, are left in full possession of their lands and property, on paying such a rent as would act as a spur to industry, while it checked that luxury which the author describes, p. 25, as prevailing in Ægypt. The Liverpool slaves are reduced from freedom to a base, helpless, unprofitable, wretched state.

When this writer, p. 27, considers the four-fifths of the produce left with the Ægyptian farmer, as only equivalent to the keep of a West-Indian slave, he must raise a blush on the sugar planter's cheek; who willingly would leave but one fifth, (the rum) both to support his plantation stock, and maintain his slaves,

But let Joseph's conduct be what the writer pleases to describe it. He was not the legislator of Ægypt, but the minister of Pharaoh, and obliged to govern himself by the prevailing customs of the kingdom. It appears, he extended only the king's revenues, and gave him such a command over the property of the people, as might enable him to arrange the management of it to the best general advantage. This might be peculiarly proper in Ægypt, though not necessary to be imitated here. Its fertility depended on the equal distribution of the waters of the Nile. It was necessary for the general benefit, that there should be an undisputed power to direct the course of the various canals, which communicated the water to each district. While the king had an equal interest in all, no particular part would be neglected. Joseph gives four-fifths of the produce, " for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for

your little ones." This confines the peoples share to their own maintenance, and the supply of seed. We are left to conclude, that every expence attending the distribution of the river, except perhaps manual labour, was paid out of the king's fifth part: and as in all good governments, the interest of the king and the people is one, Joseph, by his nominal purchase of the people and their lands, might probably have in view such an accession of power, as might enable him to direct the whole to general advantage. After the charter was confirmed, no ill use could be made of the power, and an English farmer would gladly pay one-fifth of his produce to him who should stock his farm, and pay his rent, and all his publick and parish taxes.

Page 38. "The Jews are not restrained from purchasing their own brethren." The Jews were commanded to treat their brethren, when reduced to a six years servitude, with lenity, as hired or free servants, and to send them out in the sabbatical year free, and not let them go away empty. The only cases in which we can suppose Jews could be made to serve, are their being sold for debt, or their preferring the service of a master to labour on their own account. In these cases, the laws of Moses take care of them, that they be not oppressed, and, besides the original purchase-money of their services, to have a recompence when the period is finished.

It is in this case of an Hebrew servant, that we are to look for the genuine Mosaic principles of slavery. Even here the law expresses a jealousy of the master's conduct, and guards against the abuse of his authority, restricting it to six years, and prescribing the manner of exercising it. Therefore
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when the Jews are allowed to make perpetual slaves of the Heathen, we are to consider it as a particular dispensation respecting their situation among idolaters, by which, in every slave, they made a proselyte to the true religion; or like divorces, an indulgence to their hardness of heart, which was not then capable of the purity and benevolence of the gospel, by which, marriage was made perpetual, and all men were to be treated as brethren. We can infer the doctrine of perpetual slavery as little from its permission to the Jews, as we can the keeping of concubines from the practice of Abraham, or David. Divorces are permitted to the Jews in similar expressions with the permission to hold slaves; yet our Saviour tells us, it was not so from the beginning. Moses (Deut. xvii. 14.) gives directions for the choice and duty of a king, yet Samuel tells the Jews, they had offended God in asking for a king. And though God condescended to give them a king in a manner which more unequivocally shewed his assent, than that approbation, sanction and command, which the author incautiously affirms to be given to the "slave-trade;" yet Samuel concludes them to be not the less guilty, for persevering in the request. We should be more careful than this author shews himself, how we apply our ignorant conjectures to the divine conduct; as p. 16, "Without allowing the licitness of the slave-trade, it is impossible to reconcile the justice of God with his own scriptural decisions concerning its nature;" that (p. 32) "God, without a glaring opposition to the rights of his justice, could not have approved the conduct of Joseph in enslaving the Ægyptians, and inflicted a lasting punishment on Reuben for his incest, if his enslaving of

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the Ægyptians had been a crime." These expressions would be shocking from an infidel; in what an horrid cause doth a clergyman use them?

The minds of the Jews had been broken and debased by the Egyptian bondage; the law was given them as a school-master to train them up for the perfect religion of the gospel. Their conduct in the wilderness, their frequent rebellions amidst miracles, and in the immediate presence of their Divine Deliverer, can only be imagined by those who have had opportunities of seeing how man is shorn of his worth by slavery. Only two men of all who were grown up when they came out of Egypt, were thought deserving to enter into Canaan. That whole generation must be worn out in the wilderness; and their children must be trained for 40 years before they are permitted to take possession. Their laws therefore respected the hardness of their hearts, though founded on principles which led insensibly to perfection. Thus while the perpetuity of the servitude of the Heathens condescended to the hardness of their hearts, the easy temporary service of their brethren looked forward to the gospel times, not differing, but in being for a fixed period, from modern servitude for wages in free states.

Therefore when this writer, p. 39. calls this latter service, "A Slave Trade;" the meaning of the terms is perverted. Or let him reduce his Liverpool slave trade to the circumstances of a Jew serving his brother for six years, and we shall have few objections to bring against it. What he calls there "selling him again," was transferring his service to another brother (not an Heathen) for the remainder of the term, as an apprentice is turned over to a second master.

Page 40. "If a Hebrew servant had married a wife with consent of his master, she and her child became her master's property for ever." This seems not to be candidly expressed. This wife must have been an Heathen slave, for Hebrew women had the privilege of the Sabbatical year; but if he chose to continue with his wife, he had only to renew his contract with his master. Indeed the regulation appears to have been intended as a check to the connection with slaves in the poor reduced Hebrews.

Page 41, 42. When he speaks of the (Liverpool) "slave trade having the sanction of being encouraged, almost commanded, and even enjoined, to be prosecuted by the Supreme Legislator," he puts opposition to silence. But when, p. 43. he talks of "the Almighty's forgetting himself, when he encouraged the slave trade, if it be a crime," I am happy for his sake to recollect, that the author tells us, till he was 27 years old, he knew not the value of an English expression.

Page 43. The slavery of the Gibeonites.

The land of Canaan was allotted to the Jews for an inheritance. The former inhabitants, for their sins, were to be extirpated, or expelled. The Gibeonites preferred slavery to this. Their services were allotted first to the tabernacle, then to the temple. It appears from David's application to them, on account of the famine brought on the land for Saul's massacre of them, that they were kept distinct as a people. We may suppose that they continued to occupy part of their ancient possessions (for we find in David's time that even Araunah a Jebusite was a proprietor of land) and that they were in their turn draughted off for the service of religion; those who occupied the

lands maintaining those who served. There is not one common circumstance between the manner of their becoming servants, and the present Liverpool slave trade, and hardly any more in their treatment.

Page 50. On the supposition of the iniquity of the (Liverpool) "slave trade," he speaks of the Almighty disturbing the course of nature, when the sun stood still at Joshua's command, to make it subservient to injustice and oppression, in vindication of ill-gotten property. Here he may be assured the horror of the expression will secure him from contradiction.

Page 54. "The slave trade," (still Liverpool slave trade) is in perfect harmony with the principles of the word of God respecting justice." P. 58. "The inspired writers of the New Testament did not consider it as an infraction of the principles of the gospel." Nor did these declare their own persecution for righteousness sake, to be an infraction of the principles of the gospel. The keeping of slaves, which the author constantly calls "the slave trade," was a custom then generally prevalent over the world. Neither were masters or slaves prepared for a general manumission. The spirit of Christianity was suffered gradually to undermine this mass of oppression, and wherever the gospel has prevailed, it has in fact abolished it.

We have a similar instance of this management, in the abolition of the ceremonial law of Moses. The first disciples, and even the apostles, conformed to it, though they had declared it to be an unnecessary yoke, and they suffered it to wear out gradually. That slavery was an evil, and therefore a sin in all those who inflicted it on others, in such a degree as to become an evil, is plainly declared
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in the gospel. Our Saviour tells the believing Jews, If ye continue in my word, ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free ; or shall confer new privileges on you. If freedom be a privilege or an advantage, slavery is a degradation and a disadvantage. But if a man be degraded or injured for the caprice or profit of another, that other, under whom he suffers such injury, is guilty of a sin.

Again, St. Paul, 1 Cor. viii. 21, says, " Art thou called being a servant, care not for it ; but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather." Here is plainly a direction to the disciples to submit to their situation, but to prefer freedom when fairly offered ; which in this case was its being purchased for them by the Christian congregation. This is explained, ver. 23. " Ye are bought with a price, be not (Greek become not) ye the servants of men." Avoid a situation which must debase your mind. In the Revelations, xviii. 13. slaves and souls of men are said to be articles of traffick in Babylon, the Mother of Abominations. This supposeth nothing very excellent in slavery, to make it be approved of, and commanded to be prosecuted by God.

We may now account for the manner in which St. Paul applies to Philemon in behalf of his servant Onesimus. He desires him to receive him back into his family, not now as a servant, but above a servant ; a profitable inmate, a brother beloved. He would not take advantage of the privilege of an apostle, to withhold Onesimus from his service, or consider his conversion as a bar to it, and therefore endeavours to effect a reconciliation between them. But from the manner in which

which the apostle solicits this favour, it is clear the situation of Onesimus in the family was desirable; for he requests it as a favour to Onesimus, and considers not his interposition, as the conferring of an obligation on Philemon. All this is very opposite to that West-Indian slavery with which this of Onesimus, p. 65. is compared. For the master only is considered here; neither the feelings nor profit of the slave is taken into account.

Page 72, 73. I shall not dispute his exposition of doing as we wish to be done by, as far as it goes, of "a slave's serving his master, as he if a master would wish to be served." But I would carry it a step farther. As I, a free man, settled with my family and friends about me in my native country, would not wish to be kidnapped, or to have my family enslaved, separated, and carried bound neck and heel, and stifled in the foul air of a ship's hold, all to be sold in a distant country, to toil incessantly for a man we never knew, without food or raiment, except such scraps as we may procure by breaking the sabbath; under the lash of any unfeeling boy, who may be set over us with a whip in his hand; so would not I be concerned in any such cruel oppressive inhuman treatment of others. When this author publishes his Second Part, it is to be hoped, this will be pressed home on his Liverpool patrons.

It is curious to remark, that in these researches, in which the wisdom and goodness of God is so freely applied to the Liverpool slave trade, there is not even a distant hint given of the purpose which is to be served by slavery, to shew it to be worthy "of this divine approbation, the almost divine commands." When God commands us
to

to love our neighbour, our heart goes along with the precept. But if, as this author incautiously affirms, we be commanded to exercise the slave trade, bow down our brother's body in bondage, and treat him ill, as Sarah did Hagar with impunity, we have no clue to trace out the agreement of the doctrine with divine goodness. If commanded or enjoined to use the slave trade as it is now carried on, we are commanded, (horrid even in the supposition) to commit murder, to starve, oppress, suffocate, and lead into exile, our brother, who never offended us. Suppose slavery approved of in revelation, yet surely robbery, murder, and oppression, are not approved there: and yet no man is originally reduced into a state of slavery but by such methods:—at least, when the advocates for slavery plead for a divine sanction to it, they should be able to lay down a method of making slaves of others, which shall be innocent, and may deserve that sanction.

The Jews, for their sins, were given up to captivity. Their cities were to be destroyed, their princes murdered, and their people carried to Babylon. The prophets invited the surrounding nations to come to the slaughter, and to the spoil. Here is a divine command in stronger terms than can be shewn for the Liverpool slave trade, or any other slave trade or holding of slaves. Yet what follows. These very nations thus invited, and even commanded to execute the divine judgments on the Jews, are destined to destruction, are made to cease as nations, for having obeyed the call to vengeance. Edom was amongst the first in this field of blood, and slavery, and plunder. Hear the prophet Obadiah address him:—"Thou shouldest

shouldest not have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity : thou shouldest not have stood in the cross-way to cut off those of his that did escape : thou shouldest not have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress. For the day of the Lord is near on all the heathen ;—as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee.”

The reason is plain, though instruments in God’s hands to punish a wicked people ; yet in the execution of his justice, they only satiated their own hatred, cruelty, and avarice. Let therefore the Liverpool slave trade be not only approved of, but even, as he says, commanded by God ; yet if the corporation, in prosecuting the infernal business, be actuated by avarice, or any other unworthy motive, and use cruelty, oppression, and inhumanity in the course of it, (and let those who use the trade lay their hands on their hearts, and let them, if they dare, deny the charge), then, sooner or later, divine vengeance will find them out, and plunge them into ruin with all those who encourage or abet them in it.

Page 75. Corol. 1st. “ The Scriptures declare the slave trade to be intrinsically good and licit.” Not in any other manner than Jewish arbitrary divorces, plurality of wives, or their original desire of a king ; all of which we know to have been wrong from the beginning.

Corol. 2d. “ He is highly criminal who refuses assent to the intrinsic licitness of the slave trade, declared in the Scriptures.” I hope not, if he cannot find it there, and resolves not to meddle with it, till he has discovered it.

Corol.

Corol. 3d. " He who acquiesces not in the licitness of the slave trade, disbelieves the Scriptures." Answered in Corol. 2.

Corol. 6th. " The abuses of the slave trade not an inducement to the Legislature to abolish it." If the slave trade be, as it certainly is, inseparably connected with murder, oppression, and every iniquity that has from time to time drawn down divine vengeance on guilty nations; and if the Legislature be instructed in the nature of it, and be called on to put a stop to this murder and oppression, and cannot possibly do it but by the abolition of the slave trade, (were the slave trade even commanded in the clearest terms, which is not the case, but the contrary) then is the Legislature obliged, and called on by every motive of religion and prudence, to put an immediate stop to it, that it may not bring ruin on the state.

F I N I S.